

Shine on my soul, O Changeless Light!
 Illume my earthly bed.

May spirit convoy lead the way
 To that bright place in heaven,
 Where through Thy grace Thy smile will shine,
 And show my sins forgiven.

Selections

AS A LITTLE CHILD.

Even our remote and peaceful parish is sharing in the glory and anguish of this cruel war; and when the postman this morning brought me a letter from France bearing the inscription of the censor, I apprehended that it concerned one of our lads at the front, and I opened it nervously, foreboding evil tidings and a recurrence of the heavy duty of breaking them. It was a long letter, and it was headed "Red Cross Society," and signed "Nancy Fleming."

The sight of the lassie's name brought to my remembrance the worst sorrow I have known among my folk all these fifty long years of my ministry at Glenhaven. Nancy was the niece of William Fraser, a douce farmer and an elder of the kirk; and when his widowed sister died in Dundee, leaving her bairn of three years old unprovided, he brought the little thing home to Blackeraig. His wife bade her welcome. Marget had a child of her own, a lad-bairn some six months older; but she was a kindly and God-fearing woman, and she took the little stranger to her heart; and when William died a year later she hardly needed his parting charge to be "a guide to wee Nancy."

The children were playmates and school-fellows, and Marget spared no pains, by precept and example, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The years passed, and there was no bonnier or brisker lass than Nancy in the countryside. Sandy, too, turned out a fine stalwart lad, and more and more took his father's place in the management of the farm. Marget's dream was that the two should "mak' it up wi' ane anither," and have Blackeraig for their own when she was gone.

And it seemed a likely thing; but it was not to be. Sandy took up with ill company and learned their ways. The market-day was a weekly temptation to him, and in spite of remonstrances and promises of amendment his home-coming was aye a sore grief to his mother. Nancy was vexed for her sake and his, and no less, perhaps, for her own. It touched her pride that she should be "evened" to one who was the talk of the neighbors. She took him soundly to task, and repeated provocation wore out her patience until on the eve of one market-day she bade him understand that, if he forgot himself, it would be all over between them. This angered him, and he went off next morning in sullen resentment.

That was the last that was seen of him at Blackeraig, and nothing was learned of him save that, when the market was over, he had taken the south train with the price of the beasts in his pocket. For days and weeks they waited and hoped for tidings of him, but none came; and at length they despaired. What had become of him they could only guess. Perhaps he had "gone to America," like so many others in those days when the craze for emigration was at its height, or perhaps he had enlisted at the castle.

It was a cruel aggravation of their sorrow that Marget's heart turned against Nancy. She reproached the girl for her treatment of Sandy. It was this, she maintained, that had driven

him away. She should have been patient with him, and it would never have happened. She would have married him and kept him right. It was an ill day for Blackeraig when it saw her face. She had been taken in a beggar, and this was her gratitude for all that had been done for her.

Nancy held her peace, making allowance for the injustice of a mind distraught, and indeed misdoubting in her heart that perhaps she had been overhasty and might be somewhat to blame. Nevertheless it was hard to suffer the incessant torrent of reproach, and at last she could endure it no longer. It was better that she should depart and remove the offense of her presence. And so she entered as a probationer in a Glasgow hospital, and left Blackeraig laden with maledictions.

In her loneliness poor Marget fell to brooding over her sorrow until she sickened, and week by week her strength ebbed away. Her heart hungered for her lost boy, and she would talk of the old days when he and Nancy were children. One evening, when the end was near, she told me how every night the bairns would kneel at her knee and repeat the prayers which she had taught them, Sandy first and Nancy next, and then they would say together:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
 Look upon a little child,
 Pity my simplicity,
 Suffer me to come to thee."

"It was a good prayer," I said, stupidly enough.

"Ay," she sighed, "it was a guid prayer; but it has gane unanswered—it an' mony a prayer o' mine that ma laddie wad be guided in the narrow way."

My faithless heart had no message of consolation for her—nothing but empty common-places about the will of God; and she took her sorrow to the grave.

That was four years ago, and it all came back to my remembrance when Nancy's letter arrived this morning. She told me that at the commencement of the war she had volunteered as a Red Cross nurse, and ever since had been employed in her ministry of mercy within hearing of the guns. She would tell nothing of all that she had experienced during those terrible months, but only of something which had just happened, and which she must tell me since I was the only other who would understand or maybe care. The previous day, just as the evening was closing, a relay of wounded had been brought in from the trenches, and among her charges was one horribly shattered. He was unconscious, and the surgeon after a glance shook his head. "Hopeless!" he said. "Just make him as easy as you can." She helped where help was serviceable, and, as soon as she might, hastened to that pitiful couch. She staunched and bound the gaping wounds, then smoothed the matted hair, and washed the mire and blood from the poor face. Her heart gave a sudden leap: it was Sandy's face!

She sat down beside him, holding and caressing the unutilized hand, and repeating the old childish endearments; but he lay unheeding, with fast-closed eyes. She never stirred from his side but when others claimed her ministrations; and still he remained motionless save for a choking breath now and then, like the flickering out of his scanty life. It drew near to midnight, and she bent over him and kissed his brow. "Sandy," she said, "do ye no mind Blackeraig an' your mither an' Nancy?" A flicker passed over his face, the

eyelids half lifted, and the lips moved feebly. She listened and she caught the murmur:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
 Look upon a little child,
 Pity my simplicity,
 Suffer me—"

They buried him next day in a field of France, where little crosses marked the last resting-place of many a brave Scottish lad; and when they asked Nancy what his cross should bear besides his name, she bade them put: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Sandy had come home at the last. "I wish," wrote Nancy, "his mother had known."

And I wish that I had understood God better and believed more bravely in His sure mercy; for then I might have been His messenger to Marget and emboldened her in her day of darkness to trust where she could not see, and hope to the end for the grace that should be brought unto her, and so she would not have gone down to her grave in heaviness. May He forgive me all my blindness, my unbelief, my narrow comprehension of His boundless love in Christ Jesus our Lord! It is little amends that I can make now, for my ministry is nearing its close; and therefore I am setting this down here in the hope that it may be profitable to my younger brethren who have yet many sermons to preach, and comfortable to some of the unnumbered hearts in our land which are feeling as Marget felt in these sorrowful days. It is written that "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off"; and it is a sure word. I cannot believe that a child of faith and prayer is ever finally an outcast from grace. The good seed is sown in his heart, and though it be overgrown with weeds and thorns, it remains imperishable, and it will one day spring up unto life eternal. Our eyes may never behold it, but the Holy Spirit works where we cannot see; and my faith is that even in the solemn moment of the soul's dissolution, when the world is passing away and the lust thereof, the accumulations of sin may fall off and the early faith and love reappear.—British Weekly.

SOME QUESTIONS.

Do you come nearer day by day
 To the port where your dreams anchored lie?
 Or do you sail farther and farther away
 In the angry sea with a sullen sky?
 Do you come nearer the Ought-to-be
 In the wagon you hitched to a distant star?
 Or do you drift on hopelessly,
 Content to bide with the Things-that-are?

Are you a Drone or Do-it-now?
 A Hurry-up or a Wait-a-while?
 A Do-it-so or an Anyhow?
 A Cheer-up-boys or a Never-smile?
 It's none of my business, that I know,
 For you are the captain and mate and crew
 Of that ship of yours, but the Where-you-go
 Depends on the What-and-how-you-do.

Are you a Yes or a Maybe-so?
 Are you a Will or a Guess-you'll-be?
 A Come-on-lads or a Let's-not-go?
 A Yes-I-will or an O-I'll-see?
 It isn't the least concern of mine,
 I know that well, but as time endures,
 When they thresh the wheat and store the wine,
 You'll find it's a big concern of yours.

—Selected.

"I'll sing you a lay ere I wing on my way,
 Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheer up!
 Whenever you're blue, find something to do
 For somebody else who is sadder than you.
 Cheer up! Cheer up! Cheer up!"